



Insider's Update: Icebergs
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Megan Desrosiers, CEO

As we come to the end of another amazing year, I've been thinking about all that we have to be thankful for – and how our progress in 2016 positions us to address our coast's most pressing issues in the new year and beyond.

In many ways, our work at One Hundred Miles this year calls to mind Hemingway's famous "iceberg theory" – the idea that only 10 percent of an iceberg's total mass above the water while 90 percent is hidden underwater. But that 90 percent is the base that creates the iceberg's foundation and long-term sustainability.

Over the past twelve months - with your help - OHM took leadership roles on some of the biggest issues affecting our coast, including offshore drilling, Spaceport Camden, the Sea Island Groin, the Tybee reusable bag campaign, and the storage of coal ash in coastal communities. We launched our Coastal Education Project and are planning one of our organization's biggest event to date: the *Coastal Conservation in Action: Choosing to Lead* conference on January 7th. These mission-driven projects are not only important and urgently needed, they're highly visible – the tip of the iceberg, if you will.

But of course, the best way to accomplish our mission-related work is to build a sustainable business that will last through the decades and ensure we have the capacity to respond to urgent needs. In 2013, as most of you know, One Hundred Miles was founded with only two staff members. Over the past three years, we've built our team to a staff of seven conservation professionals (attracting expertise and passion for Georgia's coast from across the country), doubled our annual funding, and built an emergency reserve fund with six months of operating resources. These foundational efforts – the base of our iceberg – aren't always flashy, but they ensure we're able to get the job done over the long haul.

And as a still-young organization, one of our ongoing challenges is clearly demonstrating our role and how it differs from or complements our partner groups while at the same time continuing our commitment to collaboration. At OHM, we truly believe that to effect sustainable change for our coast, we need to celebrate our talented partners, bridge new relationships outside of the "choir," and work to support all the groups that make our coast great. That's why in 2016, our team also spent a significant amount of time on behind-the-scenes issues that may be lower profile, but which allow us to develop and strengthen relationships with fellow conservation groups, businesses, and citizen groups across the coast. Sometimes these relationships take time to grow – naturally, we don't always see eye-to-eye on every issue – but we must all be willing to have the conversations.

So as we move into 2017 and beyond, how will we determine the projects we'll weigh in on, lead, or otherwise engage in for our coast? It's a responsibility we take seriously, both for the wise stewardship of our donor's resources and our obligation to future generations of coastal Georgians. That's why over the past three years, we have created a set of principles that carry through all our operations.

- First, as issues arise, instead of looking at individual projects in the short-term, we recognize that each is an opportunity to expand our networks and increase dialogues about an overarching strategy for coastal conservation.
- Second, we base all our positions on facts, and while we consider public opinions, we are guided by the laws, policies, and regulations that exist today as our main tools to protect the coast.
- And, last but not least, because we realize that issues aren't always black and white, we rely on the conventional and unconventional alliances we have built, along with the voices of our many coastal advocates. We do all of this with an eye on achieving the best possible solutions for the conservation of our coast.

As some of our most committed supporters, I pledge to you that in the year ahead, we will honor your investment and the trust you have placed in us by relying on these guiding principles – that we'll continue our mission-driven commitment to our coast while ensuring the state of our organization, the base of our iceberg, is strong. And there's much to look forward to in 2017: among many planned projects, we're excited to expand our presence across the coast (we're moving into our downtown Savannah location this month!)

We know you have a choice when it comes to supporting conservation in Georgia. [Thank you for choosing to support our work and believing in our coast as much as we do.](#) We look forward to continuing our work together in 2017 and beyond.